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Various Authors

THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER & Yoknapatawpha Review

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A Checklist

Two New Works On Faulkner From UT Press

Forbes, Malcolm. With Jeff Bloch. *They Went That-a-way . . .* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988. Forbes and Bloch give us the low-down on how 175 great, famous and infamous people met their demises during the past 3,000 years. Faulkner's life and death rate two pages, telling us what we already know: falls from horses, drinking, and at 1:30 a.m. on July 6, 1962, sitting up on the edge of his bed and slumping over from a heart attack. 329 pp. $18.95.

Mitgang, Herbert. "A Trove of Faulkner Film Scripts." *The New York Times*, July 28, 1987, p. 19. Reports on publication by University Press of Mississippi of *Country Lawyer and Other Stories for the Screen* by Faulkner, now in the Louis D. Brodsky Collection, edited by Brodsky and Robert W. Hamblin. " 'Country Lawyer' is like a wonderful outline for a novel," Brodsky is quoted. "It includes multigenerational and interracial incidents that are still very relevant today. The ideas and works are all very Faulknerian."

Montgomery, Theron E., ed. *Alabama Literary Review,* Vol. 1, Spring 1987. First issue of the annual *Review* has front cover drawing of Faulkner by Sergei L. Shillabeer. Troy, Ala.: Troy State University.

Notes of Mississippi Writers, Vol. XIX, No. 2 (1987). Hilton Anderson, editor. University of Southern Mississippi. Contents include "The Reception of William Faulkner in Spain," by Catalina Montes, and "Functions of Leftness and 'Dam' in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury,*" by Tom Bowden.

Oates, Stephen B. "Master and Apprentice: Sherwood Anderson and William Faulkner." *Timeline,* a publication of the Ohio Historical Society, Vol. 3, No. 6 (December 1986-January 1987) pp. 2-11. Cover article is illustrated by 13 photographs including four from the Cofield Collection. The article is an expanded version of the Anderson-Faulkner relationship told in Oates' biography, *William Faulkner: The Man and the Artist.* Accompanying it are biographical sidebars on Anderson, Faulkner and Col. J.R. Cofield. $4.

_____. *William Faulkner: The Man and the Artist.* New York: Harper & Row, 1988. Perennial Library paperback printing of the biography first published in 1987. 363 pp. $9.95.

Phillips, Gene D. *Fiction, Film, and*

(Continued Page 2)

1988 Faulkner Conference

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS at the 15th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference July 31-August 5 at the University of Mississippi included (top, from left) M. Thomas Inge, Thomas A. Dardis, Joseph Blotner, Judith L. Sensibar and Louis J. Budd, and (below, from left) David Madden, William Brevda, George Garrett and Bruce Kawin. Discussions at the 1988 conference focused on the theme of "Faulkner and Popular Culture." Theme for the 1989 conference July 30-August 4 will be "Faulkner and Religion." —University of Mississippi Photos

Faulkner in Venezuela

His Best Advice for Aspiring Writers: "Go Home and Write"

This is the third of four installments reporting on Faulkner's April 1961 goodwill mission to Venezuela, drawn from files of the sponsoring North American Association and of the U.S. State Department. At the end of part two, Faulkner has departed Caracas for home at the conclusion of a 16-day visit during which he was lionized everywhere he went. Four days before Faulkner's April 18 departure, Charles E. (Chilly) Harner, public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy, had filed a report on the visit with the U.S. Information Agency in Washington.

By WILLIAM BOOZER

"Faulkner is completing a triumphal visit to Venezuela," Harner wrote. "He has worked incessantly and with the utmost of good humor at attending every function to which he has been assigned, and crowds have turned out to meet him wherever he has appeared.

"The success of his visit is an outstanding example of the respect with which Venezuela—like other parts of Latin America—holds a cultural leader. The comparative play that *Panorama* gave Faulkner and Gagarin is a typical example of Latin American values."

An April 27 dispatch to Washington, written by Sanford and signed by Harner, expanded on Harner's earlier report.

"Everywhere [Faulkner went] the genius of his human qualities played as great a part in his relationships as his literary reputation," the April 27 report reads. "The most diverse elements of the political, social and cultural worlds vied with one another to pay him homage. Wherever he went he left the imprints of his forceful personality, his gentle wisdom, and his unmistakable greatness.

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Rowan Oak

Barn, Kitchen, Tenant House Deteriorating

By JIM CLEVELAND

The legacy of William Faulkner is pervasive on the grounds of Rowan Oak, his Oxford home. In the white-pillared house at the end of a corridor of ancient cedars, his aura seems to permeate the place. Huge oaks and a giant magnolia are showpieces of the lawn.

But apart from the house and grounds, which the University of Mississippi maintain as an historical and cultural landmark, three outbuildings are disappearing in the long, slow way that claimed the Old South. Ole Miss needs money to save them.

"The roofs are caving in," said Curator Howard Bahr, an English instructor who has devoted long hours to the quiet landscape that draws visitors from throughout the world. "The bricks are turning back to sand. The logs are rotting away."

The rotting logs are hand-hewn timbers of the barn, part of the original homestead of 1840. One wall has bulged out 12 inches and is being shored up by plywood barricades. The ceiling has rotted through.

Also in bad condition is the free-standing brick building originally used as a kitchen and, in Faulkner's time, as a smokehouse and storage building. The red bricks, hand-fired on the premises nearly 150 years ago, are slowly disintegrating. Patches cover large sections of the roof that have rotted.

The other building, a tenant house, is in better shape but also needs repairs.

When Ole Miss bought Rowan Oak in 1973, wallpaper was hanging in shreds and fences were leaning precariously. Extensive interior and exterior repairs were made. A complete renovation of the house came in 1979-80. Since 1983, Ole Miss has been trying to raise money for the other needed repairs and renovations. About $14,550 has been raised toward a goal of $250,000, and is currently being used to do what is possible.

Physical Plant Director Paul Hale says only the most critical needs can be addressed. Meanwhile, the project architect is talking to contractors who may have the skills for the painstaking renovations desired. Hale said workers will exchange the kitchen's disintegrating exterior bricks with better ones from the interior if possible. He

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Faulkner in Venezuela (From Page 1)

"His effect upon people was remarkable. They were charmed by his courtliness, his integrity, his courageous approach to social problems, and his gaiety of spirit. To them all he was *el hombre simpático.*

"At his first press conference he established his views on life and art. Gathered round the conference table were representatives of newspapers of every political hue. Several of them had clearly come prepared to ask embarrassing questions. Mr. Faulkner answered every question fairly, with great tact and understanding of the motivation of the questioner. He handled the subject of racial problems in the United States with insight and sympathy. He did not hesitate to ascribe to each race the specific responsibilities it has in working toward a solution of the problem. From the first published results of the press conference it was evident that Mr. Faulkner had evoked a favorable response. Most of the coverage on him during the remainder of his tour proceeded from the tone set at this conference . . . .

"Seeing his works in Spanish translation inspired Mr. Faulkner to revive an idea that he has apparently held for some time. He was delighted to discover that his translated works were so well known in Venezuela, but it disturbed him to remember how little known were eminent Latin American writers in the United States. He promised several times in public addresses and in private conversation that when he returned to the United States one of his first projects would be to convince a foundation that it should underwrite a program for the translation of the works of Latin American authors into English."

Faulkner's remarks in press conferences and at functions during the visit were wide ranging on everything from writing to problems of integration at home.

At the April 3 luncheon with President Betancourt, the guest of honor elaborated on press conference remarks earlier that day that "the free countries must join together more" if they are to remain free, citing cultural interchange as an example of hemispheric rapprochement.

At that press conference at the Tamanaco on his second day in town, Faulkner had been "assailed from all sides by reporters anxious to gain insight into one of the giants of modern literature," the English-language *Daily Journal* reported. What they heard from Faulkner was "I'm just a farmer" who operates a 360-acre farm near Oxford and rides horses when he isn't in Virginia hunting foxes.

Which among his literary works is tops? "None. They have all failed."

"But that's why writers keep writing books," he went on. "Writers never really end their work. They are aiming for the impossible and they know it. The real writer tries to put down all the experience he has seen and felt and lived through, and dreamed—in a form that it can be read.

"This always fails. So he tries again. We never accomplish that, but we never give up the attempt. And that's why the writer's—or I should say, artist's—life is the best life of all."

He didn't like to rank writers or even put good and bag tags on literature. "Literature should be written and read—not discussed. I can only judge writers by their degree of failure."

In rating his contemporaries on their failures, Faulkner flirted again with a subject that had caused trouble for him with Ernest Hemingway years before. In "degree of failure," he told the Venezuelan journalists, he placed Thomas Wolfe above Erskine Caldwell, John Steinbeck, Hemingway, and John Dos Passos.

But "we all fail," he added. "We have all tried to capture the beauty and passion of being alive and put it between covers of a book—but we all fail. Wolfe made the most splendid of all failures. Hemingway is on the bottom of the list because he always knew what he was doing. Wolfe shot the works at one blow. Hemingway played close to his chest."

One reporter asked what side Faulkner would be on if the Civil War was being fought now. There are some things that he didn't like about his home state, but "Mississippi is my mother," he replied. "I was raised there. My sympathies are there."

Mike Culbert of the *Daily Journal* asked Faulkner why and how he began to write.

"As a lad I had a lot of chores to do around the house," Faulkner said. "I had to fetch water, help feed the horses, etc. I discovered pretty soon that when I dreamed up stories to tell my friends they would do the work. I learned to write and spell—and by that time I was sunk." He began writing stories and poems at about age eight. He still likes poetry, he said, citing T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as among the best of the moderns.

Modern fiction? "I haven't picked up a new book by a new writer for 15 or 20 years unless my friends happened to say it's particularly good." But that is "a condition all writers get into as they get a little age on them; they go back to the books that impressed them in their youth."

He named Dickens, Conrad, Tolstoy and Shakespeare as the writers who most impressed him, and said that he reads *Don Quijote* every year. Other works he returns to are the Old Testament and the *Oxford Book of English Verse.*

Of *Sanctuary*, Faulkner said he had "published three or four books without making money and decided it might be pleasant to find out how having a little money felt." So he dreamed up "the most fantastic story I could, to sell."

"I wrote it, sent it to the publisher, and he answered me, 'My God, we'll all be in jail!"

Faulkner went on to write and publish other books. "One day I received the galley proof of *Sanctuary.* I read it again and realized it was a crass, base job for crass, base reasons."

He tried to get the publisher to destroy the plates, but that would have been too costly. Faulkner decided he would rewrite the book in a manner not to make the author or publisher ashamed, with author and publisher sharing the cost.

"I learned my lesson—never to write one word for money again."

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Checklist (From Page 1)

Faulkner: The Art of Adaptation. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988. Phillips, professor of English at Loyola University in Chicago, concerns himself primarily with the degree to which the films of Faulkner's fiction, almost all of which were scripted by others, "are worthy renditions of the stories from which they were derived." The TV version of "Barn Burning," he finds, "proved . . . that the little screen can be just as felicitous a medium for Faulkner adaptations as the big screen. Faulkner's fiction continues to be eminently adaptable to visual media because his fictional works generally have rather melodramatic plots and high emotional central characters—two elements which together help to engage and hold the viewer's attention. At the same time, the episodic nature of his plots makes it easy to adjust them to the needs of both motion pictures and television." Foreword, "Fiction versus Film," by Jerry Wald, reprinted from *Films in Review* 5, No. 1 (1954) Twenty-one photographs. Filmography. xv + 217 pp. $24.95.

Schwartz, Lawrence H. *Creating Faulkner's Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988. Schwartz, an associate professor of English at Montclair State College, deals with the role of the New Critics (those "interested in explication of poetic texts and who published in and were involved with *Southern Review, Sewanee Review, Kenyon Review,* and the Kenyon School") and New York intellectuals (critics and writers drawn to the *Partisan Review* in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s) in shaping a new post-World War II literary consensus and dominant aesthetic. "Because Faulkner's difficult style was tied to complex, exotic, and macabre themes, critics in the prewar years generally deemed his fiction curiously interesting, but inaccessible and remote," Schwartz writes. "Yet, after the war, Faulkner more than any other writer was seen as the 'supreme' individualist. He was dedicated, aloof, and isolated, a creative genius stubbornly committed to his personal vision. Faulkner's sacrifice and struggle to survive as an artist, combined with his concern for the ordinary life of the South, came to symbolize spiritual and moral courage. His provincialism and deep attachment to 'human verities' in a traditional setting were now interpreted as a standard by which to measure morality in an increasingly amoral world." 286 pp. $24.95.

The Well-Stocked Bookcase: Sixty Enduring Novels by Americans Published Between 1926-1986. New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1987. Selections by the Club's Editorial Board. Included in the 60 choices in the club's 60th anniversary year are *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Light In August* (1932), with brief assessments, respectively, by Gloria Norris and Wilfrid Sheed. (The selection for 1936, the year of *Absalom, Absalom!,* was Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind,* which Clifton Fadiman here calls "not a great novel, but...a great story.")

Yorifuji, Michio. "*Absalom, Absalom!*—the Southern History of 'That Mistake.' " Tsuru, Japan: *Tsuru University Review,* No. 28 (March 1988), pp. 69-105. Illustrated study is in Japanese, with summary and notes in English.

_____. "The Beginning of the Experiment—The Meaning of *Soldiers' Pay* in the Faulkner Literature." *Tsuru University Review,* No. 27 (1987), pp. 27-52. In Japanese and English. Illustrated with photos of graves of Faulkner and Caroline Barr ("Mammie Callie"), a sketch of Rowan Oak, and cover of the June 1953 *Atlantic Monthly,* picturing Faulkner and Sherwood Anderson.

_____. "The 'New' Nagano Seminar and the Return of the Faulkner Scroll." *Tsuru Studies in English Linguistics and Literature,* Tsuru University Association of English Literature, No. 16 (1988), pp. 73-91. Report on the November 1987 Nagano Seminar and deposit by Professor James B. Meriwether in the Nagano Municipal Library of a scroll presented to Faulkner at Nagano in 1955. Essay is in Japanese, with summary in English. Illustrated.

Quotable Quote

Barry Hannah, in "In Honor of Oxford at One Hundred and Fifty" (1987), privately published in a trade edition and 100 numbered, signed copies:

. . . Words of Faulkner ricochet off everything.
The man was such a blabbermouth,
Eventually he covered everything,
Writing in the grand tradition of Saying Everything Possible.

Little quiet snob of a man.
Ate my sandwiches, spat them out, drank a quart, said:
What else can you show me?
Salute him or go away. You can't
Walk through a statue . . . .

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Órgano de la Universidad del Zulia, Maracaibo, 3 de Junio de 1961

¿Está Erigida su Obra Sobre el Odio Racista?

por Adolfo García Díaz

—Las preguntas que a continuación voy a formularle, Sr. Faulkner, se refieren, casi todas exclusivamente, a problemas particulares de su extraordinaria producción literaria.

Todas tienen, por así decirlo, un carácter "académico". Como finalidad no persiguen hacer resaltar valores que con más rigor pueden calificarse "estéticos"; pues para conocer éstos es obvio que al lector le basta abrir cualquiera de sus libros y leerlo.

Me guía la intención de preguntar por ese sentido en términos no de pensamiento filosófico, p o l i t i c o, social, etc., sino de pensamiento literario, es decir, la pretensión de entender una especifica creación literaria con la ayuda principalmente de la literatura.

—Para comenzar, tomaré como punto de partida una observación, acerca de Ud., hecha por G. Snell (The Shapers of American Fiction, 1947 pp. 103-104): **"...vemos por primera vez como un escritor americano escapa de los fétidos abismos de un Brown, un Poe o un Melville hacia estados de ánimo más libres en que una visión de la humanidad es posible en sus aspectos ordinarios".**

Sin embargo, dejando aparte las superficiales semejanzas y hondas diferencias que se han señalado ya entre Ud. y Poe e insistiendo en lo que el mismo Snell ha denominado la **"tragedia demoníaca"** del Sur de Faulkner, ¿sería válido pensar que el conflicto, presente en sus narraciones, entre los representantes del Viejo Sur y los del Nuevo, ha recibido así sea de manera inconsciente, un tratamiento, pudiera decirse, "melvillesco", que lo convierte en una especie de lucha entre el Bien y el Mal?

—El conflicto, por ejemplo, entre los Sartorises y los Snopeses, miembros los unos del Viejo Sur y los otros del Nuevo, ¿es un combate en el que están limpios de culpa los primeros en cuanto imágenes encarnadas (de la moral viva y el humanismo) según ha sugerido O'Donnell ("Faulkner Mithology"), en contraposición a los segundos —imágenes de lo decadente y antihumano? ¿Es que no han tenido la culpa de su conducta, de haber llegado a ser cada uno **"un monumento caído"**, como Miss Emily Grierson?

—Por otra parte, hay quienes piensan que la explicación incluso de la culpabilidad de los Snopeses, y de los personajes como Thomas Sutpen, en que se reflejan los rasgos de éstos, hay que buscarla en otra dirección, pues no reside en ellos mismos.

Así, G e i s m a r **(Writers in Crisis,** 1942, p. 172) sostiene que "...**es el negro la causa fundamental de la destrucción de Thomas Sutpen y de su dinastía sureña...**".

De acuerdo con esto, la mayoría de los personajes de sus novelas servían —tomados en conjunto— una especie de ambiguos Benitos Cereno a lo Melville, a los que ni siquiera les quedaba el recurso de arrojarse por la borda para alcanzar la lancha salvadora. ¿Podría interpretarse este aspecto de su obra en términos de un pretendido y literario "odio" **racista?**

—Insistiendo en el tema del Negro, se podría pensar a primera vista que pasajes como el bien conocido de **Light in August** "Pienso —dice Miss Borden— **en todos los niños que nacen y nacen en un mundo de blancos, con esa sombra negra que ha caído sobre ellos ya antes de que respiren... Y me parece como si los niños blancos estuvieran luchando, antes de respirar, para escapar de esa sombra...**") son el equivalente, en su obra del célebre capítulo de Melville, en **Moby Dick**, acerca de la blancura de la ballena. Sólo que aquí se habría dado una inversión de colores.

. Por un lado sería la blancura de **Moby Dick** y por otro la negrura del Negro, lo que haría de ellos **"honor trascendente"**, símbolos del mal. Pero, a mí me parece que no es así como el simbolismo del **Moby Dick** puede ayudarnos a comprender su obra. ¿No es acaso la "cruz negra" que llevan ciertos de sus personajes blancos el resultado de su locura, de la misma locura que conduce al Capitán Ahab al desastre? ¿No se les podría reprochar su rencor y su furia con las mismas palabras de Starbuck: **"Oh, Ahab!... Mira! Moby Dick no te busca; eres tú, tú, el que la busca ciego de locura!"?**

Me parece, además, que esa locura a que me he referido antes se presenta, en el "mundo faulkneriano", como el síntoma de algo más profundo, que, para decirlo esquemáticamente, consiste en la actitud errada del hombre frente a la Naturaleza. ¿No es en verdad una coincidencia fortuita, pero altamente reveladora, que en **Go Down, Moses** sea otra bestia —el oso y no ya la ballena— el símbolo en que se aunan **"valentía y honor y orgullo, y piedad y amor de justicia y libertad"?** ¿No s e r i a pues, acertado concluir que es en el momento mismo, en que instintivamente, el joven cazador siente que el oso representa algo eterno y baja su arma, cuando encuentra —al par que nos lo revela— el camino para escapar de tal locura?

—Si tanto en los Sartorises, como en los Snopeses, pudiera detectarse la misma actitud errada frente a la Naturaleza, eso querría decir que ni unos ni otros están limpios de culpa. El Viejo Sur sería el culpable de su ruina, de su condena, de la "cruz negra", del Nuevo Sur. Pues, de hecho, una actitud correcta frente a la Naturaleza implica al mismo tiempo una actitud correcta frente al hombre.

La ambición de dominar ésta va unida con la ambición de dominar y esclavizar a los hombres. La explotación de la una y de los otros, la falta de piedad y amor, son crímenes que los hombres vengan en sí mismos.

Así nos preguntamos, Sr. Faulkner, ¿su mensaje de salvación no consistirá en pedir que el hombre descubra la verdad de **"la solitaria hermandad de la sangre extraña de un viejo Negro y del espíritu salvaje e invencible de un viejo oso"**, para descubrir la verdad de él mismo?

El símbolo central de su obra no sería la ballena blanca sino el Negro-Oso, al que persiguen y seguirán persiguiendo gentes como Popeye, como Flem Snopes, como el Capitán Ahab; gentes que odian y tratan de poseer la Naturaleza y al hombre, porque les temen.

—Esos personajes, esas ruinas que paradójicamente integran un Nuevo Sur, justo por carecer en tanta y aún en mayor medida de futuro y de libertad como Ahab, están ahogados en un tiempo **"pasa y todavía en curso"** para decirlo con sus propias palabras.

Su tiempo no tiene futuro, ni es nunca un presente, sino un pasado haciéndose pasado.

Pretenden vivir en un nostálgico mundo de ayer que jamás tuvo porvenir. De este modo, el tratamiento que da Ud. al tiempo en la narración ¿lleva implícito el propósito de hacer resaltar la extraña situación de tales personajes o ha tenido Ud. en mente alguna otra intención extraliteraria?

—No creo que dentro de la c r í t i c a contemporánea pueda sostenerse ya la idea de que las peculiaridades de su estilo y de sus méritos no son sino meros juegos de inteligencia. Una vez se dijo, por ejemplo, que Henry James gasta, en **The Sacred Fount, más fuerza intelectual que la que Kant pudo haber utilizado en la "Crítica de la Razón Pura"**, para pintar relaciones entre personas no más interesantes que la que podrían darse entre canarios.

(Pasa a la página 12)

Faulkner desciende las escalinatas de la Casa de Gobierno después de visitar al Gobernador Dr. Eloy Párraga Villamarín. Le acompañan miembros de la Colonia Norteamericana.

Dibujo de Myrna de Pascual

PALABRAS DE FE

Nuestra tragedia de hoy es un miedo universal y puramente físico que, por llevar padeciéndolo tanto tiempo, apenas si podemos soportar más. Ya no cuentan los problemas del espíritu sino la cruda pregunta: ¿cuándo me tocará saltar hecho trizas? Debido a esto, el joven (o la joven) que se dedican hoy a escribir, ha olvidado esos problemas derivados del corazón humano en conflicto consigo mismo que son los únicos de donde puede surgir una buena literatura, por ser de ellos de los únicos que merece la pena escribir, con todas las angustias y sudores que el abordarlos supone.

Y tiene que volver a recordar tales problemas, tiene que convencerse de que la mayor vileza que cabe es tener miedo, y, una vez convencido, olvidar para siempre todo lo que no sean las viejas realidades y verdades del corazón, las viejas verdades ecuménicas —amor, honra, piedad, orgullo, compasión, sacrificio— sin cuya presencia cualquier relato está condenado a muerte, a perderse en la inanidad de lo efímero. Hasta que proceda así, trabajará bajo una maldición. Escribirá, no del amor, sino del deseo, de derrotas en que nadie pierde nada de valor, de victorias sin esperanza y, lo que es peor, sin piedad ni compasión. Sus cuitas no conmoverán la osamenta del universo, no dejarán cicatriz alguna tras sí. De lo que escribirá será de las glándulas, no del corazón.

Hasta que vuelva a aprender estas cosas, escribirá como si estuviera ahí para asistir al fin del hombre. Yo no creo en el fin del hombre. Es harto simple decir que el hombre es inmortal sencillamente porque perseverará, porque cuando el eco de la última campanada del juicio se haya apagado en la última y más miserable roca, vacilante, aunque ya no la sacuda la marea, en el último crepúsculo rojizo y agonizante, aun entonces habrá todavía un sonido más: el de la mezquina pero inextinguible voz humana que seguirá hablando y hablando. Lo que yo creo es algo más. Creo que el hombre no sólo perdurará, sino que prevalecerá. Es inmortal, no porque sea de todas las criaturas la única que posee una voz inextinguible, sino porque tiene un alma, un espíritu, capaz de compasión y de sacrificio y de sufrimiento.

El deber del poeta, del escritor, es escribir sobre estas cosas. Su privilegio consiste en la ayuda que puede prestar al hombre para que perdure, aupando su corazón y recordándole qué son el valor, el honor, la esperanza, la dignidad, la compasión, la piedad. La voz del poeta no tiene por qué ser un simple testimonio del hombre, sino que puede constituir también uno de los puntales que le ayuden a sostenerse y prevalecer.

WILLIAM FAULKNER

Faulkner en rueda de prensa en el Hotel del Lago

"Mi Corazón No Encierra Odio a Nadie": Faulkner

—Es para mí un gran honor —entre los muchos que me han hecho en Venezuela— el que se me haya solicitado exponer algunas de mis opiniones y creencias en una de las publicaciones de la Universidad del Zulia.

Digo que es un honor, porque, tal como he tratado de aclararlo repetidamente durante mi visita, soy un simple aldeano que piensa que escribir es una vocación muy satisfactoria.

Por lo mismo, no soy un letrado, y me temo que no tengo la competencia para tratar muchos de los puntos incluidos en su cuidadoso cuestionario. Así, con su permiso, procuraré expresar algunas de mis ideas sobre el oficio de escribir (a diferencia de la literatura), relacionándolas tan apretadamente como me sea posible, con las cuestiones que me plantea.

—Cada escritor tiene a su disposición tres grandes depósitos de que extraer el material que entra en su obra: primero su propia experiencia, de la que sus lecturas constituyen quizás el elemento más importante; segundo, su observación del prójimo, de su circunstancia, de todo lo que va integrando su vida; y tercero, su imaginación. De los tres, pudiera decir que el primero es el más utilizado, puesto que incluye las lecturas del escritor.

Consciente o inconscientemente, extrae éste de ahí todo lo que necesita para contar sus narraciones —la historia de la eterna lucha del hombre en medio de las complejidades del corazón humano y de la condición humana.

Todo escritor, en verdad, es un inveterado ladrón y un mentiroso congénito. Usa todas y cualquiera de las cosas con que tropieza en sus lecturas y en sus demás experiencias si eso le sirve efectivamente para narrar la historia del hombre. ¿Es esto "bueno" o "malo"? No lo sé. No creo que le importe al escritor. Ocupado como está en hablar de gente en acción, echa mano de cualquier herramienta disponible que le pueda ayudar.

Cervantes, Tolstoi, Shakespeare... todos ellos saquearon a sus contemporáneos y sus predecesores y nunca pararon mientes en ello.

En consecuencia, la pregunta acerca de si el conflicto entre los representantes del Viejo y los del Nuevo Sur ha sido construida, "a la manera de Melville", como un conflicto entre el Bien y el Mal, nos llevaría a una discusión que quisiera dejar en manos de los profesores de literatura y de los críticos.

Mi único interés se centra en torno de la lucha que el hombre emprende contra su propia naturaleza y su circunstancia, para tratar de ser un poco más valiente, un poco más fuerte, en su constante esfuerzo frente a la inclinación al mal que nos es innata.

Me pregunta si algunos de los personajes de mis obras tienen la culpa de su propia condena. Puede ser. No lo sé. Mi respuesta puede parecer petulante, pero no intento que lo sea y espero que no se interprete de esa manera. Es una de mis creencias básicas la de que en toda novela se debe hacer constar en la primera página que el autor no es en modo alguno responsable de la conducta, actitudes o credos de los personajes.

Debo decir, además, que una vez que un autor ha terminado una novela no puede hacer ya nada más con ella. La razón es simple. Cada vez que se pone a contarnos, lo hace porque ha vislumbrado algo tan conmovedor, tan noble, tan grande en su conjunto, que debe ponerlo en el papel, al igual que el músico, el pintor o el escultor está compelido a plasmar sus visiones en sonido, tela o mármol. Para el escritor, lo ideal sería capturar esta visión, tomada en todo lo que tiene de tremenda dentro de una palabra única y brillante, como un rayo de luz.

Pero tal es imposible. Así trata de hacerlo dentro de un cuarteto o de un soneto, y si puede, es un poeta. Si ha menester de diez páginas, es un cuentista. Y si esto excede con mucho a sus fuerzas, usa cien mil palabras y se convierte en novelista. Como puede verse, cada novelista es un poeta fracasado.

Pero hay algo más. Todo novelista que es sincero consigo mismo sabe que es un fracaso; sabe que no ha logrado llevar a cabo lo que se propuso, aún cuando emplee cien mil palabras en ese esfuerzo. Da la espalda a su fracaso y trata de nuevo.

Y siempre se ocupa de la misma historia —de la historia de las gentes en acción, del lado trágico o cómico, noble o bajo, heroico o cobarde, de los hombres débiles, frágiles, que tratan siempre de sobreponerse al Viejo Ned que hay en ellos.

En el cuestionario se hace referencia a una posible interpretación de mi obra en términos de un literario odio racial. Me doy cuenta de que tal pregunta es inevitable y me siento feliz al responderla, porque tengo hondas convicciones acerca de esto.

—Comenzaré por decir que mi corazón no encierra odio a nadie. Siento que los blancos tienen la responsabilidad de hacer posible que el negro se eduque y que los negros tienen la responsabilidad de sufrir su libertad.

Si se me permite repetirme, me referiré una vez más a las palabras del famoso irlandés John Philpot Curran, que he citado varias veces durante mi estancia en Venezuela. La fama de Curran se basa casi por completo en sus discursos en favor de los acusados en juicios estatales.

En uno de estos juicios, observaba, en 1790, que "La condición bajo la que Dios ha concedido libertad al hombre es la responsabilidad y vigilancia continua. Y si rompe esta condición, la servidumbre es al par la consecuencia de su crimen y el castigo de su culpa".

Esto se aplica particularmente al negro de mi país, puesto que no es un mundo de negros sino de blancos, en el que debe triunfar. En mi país el negro no ha tenido la oportunidad de adiestrarse mediante la educación para triunfar sobre las condiciones económicas dentro de las que tiene que compartir sus bienes con el hombre blanco.

Esta no es una reflexión en absoluto sobre el negro, desde la perspectiva racial. Este ha mostrado en numerosos casos que es capaz por completo de tener todas las cualidades morales e intelectuales del hombre blanco.

Prueba de esto es la distancia que el negro ha recorrido bajo la terrible impedimenta de su condición, en sólo trescientos años. No puedo pensar de pronto en ninguna otra raza que haya avanzado tanto con tantos obstáculos en tan corto tiempo.

Si muchos blancos en mi país no creyeran esto, no haríamos el esfuerzo que hacemos, hemos hecho y seguiremos haciendo para que tenga la oportunidad el negro de ir tan lejos como sea capaz.

Debo disculparme por no tocar más directamente otras cuestiones que usted ha traído a colación; pero no lo he hecho por la simple razón de que no me siento capacitado para entrar en ellas.

Les repito a mis amigos extranjeros que soy lo que muestro ser: un simple aldeano que escribe porque le gusta. Podría concluir diciendo que el único gusto comparable a este en mi vida, es la de hacer amistad con personas de otros países, tal como la he hecho durante mi breve estancia en Venezuela, y le ruego que mi falla en el papel de letrado no sea interpretado como una actitud mezquina, que ciertamente mal me sentaría frente al sincero calor y afecto que se me ha demostrado en este hospitalario país.

—Gracias una vez más por invitarme a aparecer en las páginas de su periódico.

El Dr. Raúl Osorio, Director de la Escuela de Educación, hace la presentación del escritor William Faulkner a los estudiantes de la Facultad de Humanidades y Educación de L.U.Z.

—William Boozer Collection

Faulkner in Venezuela (From Page 2)

Faulkner told of having worked nights at the Old Miss power plant, where from midnight to 4 a.m. was free time in which to write. He wrote *As I Lay Dying* there in six weeks "and didn't change one word of it."

The stock question of how one writes was fielded by Faulkner. He writes in longhand "on paper, backs of envelopes, bills of fare—anything," producing the next draft "using one finger on the typewriter" before a final draft is typed professionally.

Never satisfied with his work, he has so far burned two books.

The matter of Southern race problems was prompted by a question about the work of Richard Wright.

"His tragedy was his color," Faulkner said of Wright, "something his soul couldn't stand. As we all do, in *Black Boy* he wrote of the human being in the human dilemma.

"But he gradually lost the concept of the tragedy of the human being (by putting emphasis on) the human being in a social condition; in my opinion, that's when his work began to go down."

Faulkner went on to say that "it will take more than just books to establish the goodwill necessary to help the concept that the Negro is a man. Something warmer than paper is needed." He thinks his books "can help to present the condition of the backward Negro who, through no fault of his own, does not know how to cope with liberty when he gets it."

"One of the curses of our age is the quick, glib talk about liberty and rights. People must learn the responsibility of being free."

As he had done in a speech to the Delta Council at Delta State College in Cleveland, Miss. nine years before, Faulkner quoted John Curran, the Irish statesman (1750-1817): "God has vouchsafed man liberty only on the condition of vigilance and responsibility."

This applies to the "betterment of the Negro's condition in my country," he added. "He should not get liberty with bayonets, but by earning it. If he does not learn responsibility with liberty, all the bayonets in the world are useless."

Public school improvements are being carried out in Mississippi in the hope that the Negro will go to his own schools instead of to white ones, but school officials had waited too late for that.

"There is a limited reservoir of energy to be used in solving the problem. Some white people cannot be changed—all they can do is die. All this energy should be used on the Negro to teach him to be a more responsible citizen.

"Negroes will have to be in the position that the white man will tell him, 'Come join us.' For a time, the Negro's idea must be that he is better than the white man."

When asked what he thought about integration, Faulkner smiled and said, "Well, I haven't heard of a law yet that could interfere between Romeo and Juliet."

Finally, on the subject of race, he said the integration issue in the South has two sides and "although many of the legal acts have done harm, when you're moving you run the risk of having your knees and elbows skinned."

Any tips for aspiring writers? It is absolutely necessary that they write for the sake of writing, not money, said Faulkner.

"The writer must have more than the desire to write. He needs the urge to put something down on paper—something so beautiful he wants to put it down so that someone else may read it."

Faulkner's best advice for those who want to write: "Go home and write."

Sitting with 16 Venezuelan and North American university students around a table at the Centro Venezolano-Americano on April 5, Faulkner was asked if he ever became a slave to characters he had created. "Yes, and sometimes they work the bejeezus out of me."

"A writer," he said at one point, "is influenced by everything he has ever read, from a telephone book on up."

Faulkner's 305-word Andrés Bello acceptance speech had been written by him in English. He delivered it April 6 in Spanish from a translation arranged for him by NAA.

The artist pursues a single objective from which he cannot deviate, Faulkner

(Continued Page 4)

Faulkner in Venezuela (From Page 3)

said. He must strive to put into more lasting form than his own frail, ephemeral self, what he has known in his brief time here: "the passion and the hope, the beauty, the tragedy, and comedy of man, weak and frail and unconquerable; man who struggles and suffers and triumphs amid the conflicts of the human heart, the human condition."

What impression did he have of the people of Venezuela? Will he write anything on this subject when he returns home?

"I cannot wait to write and tell the people of my country what I think about Venezuela. Before I came to Venezuela, I wanted to know about the country so I could be a good visitor. I read the history and many other reports on the traditions of Venezuela. But the truth is, I found here something I did not find in any book and which never ceases to surprise me. I refer to the warmth and courtesy with which I have been received and the help they have given in trying to understand me, without my having a full command of their language."

What is his opinion of the works of Gallegos?

"When I was a young man, I read by coincidence one of his poems which had been translated into English, and I said, 'Yes, this is true.' Later I tried to find more of his work, and only succeeded in finding one of his books in Spanish, which I tried with the help of a dictionary to read. In this manner a lot was lost in the translation, but regardless of this I was still left with the impression that what he writes is the truth and will always be true. In my opinion, Romulo Gallegos is a great man."

Pablo Neruda? Faulkner thought for a moment before answering. "I don't know him. For the reason that most works done by Latin authors are not translated into English." He then told again of hoping on his return home to do something to encourage the translating into English of more works by Latin authors, "especially the young writers, for distribution to all schools" where the reading of them would be compulsory.

One reporter injected a lighter mood when he wanted to know what Faulkner thought about the Russians putting a man into space.

Faulkner replied, smiling, "Well, that's fine for anyone who wants to go there, but I like it here."

Had he ever "repented" any of his writings?

"No, both of those books I burnt."

Does a good writer need to have lived his experiences before he can really express himself through writing? No, Faulkner said; the only thing needed is a "demon" on the back of the writer pushing him.

Bill Pugh would report on April 28 to the USIA in Washington that 16 reporters and photographers had attended the Maracaibo press conference on April 12.

"The attendance, further swelled by interested persons from the university, brought comments of surprise from veteran newspapermen who are accustomed to being three or four persons at such sessions. Mr. Faulkner proved adept at fielding all questions with simple and direct replies, and invariably made the authors of intentionally embarrassing questions the object of group laughter."

The press conference was recorded for later broadcast, Pugh reported, and the resulting press coverage was excellent. An Ondas del Lago television cameraman was hired to film the highlights of the Maracaibo visit. The film was telecast, with script written and narrated by the U.S. Information Service, immediately following Faulkner's departure.

During the two-day stay, two-minute human interest bulletins on Faulkner's whereabouts and activities were prepared and delivered by USIS to eight radio stations, Pugh concluded his report. Finding human interest was not difficult, for Mr. Faulkner "was constantly providing choice comments." The only problem was in preserving the original humor in translation.

A still photographer had been engaged to record the Maracaibo visit, resulting in full-page treatment in the daily newspaper *Panorama.*

In addition to extensive print media coverage everywhere Faulkner went, a well-known writer, Clara Diament de Sujo, prepared a series of ten 15-minute programs on Faulkner which were broadcast on national radio.

A roundtable discussion on his life and work was aired on national television. Taking part were the poet Rafael Pineda, the critic Orlando Araujo, and the novelist Arturo Croce.

Finally, the Embassy would report, "Faulkner's visit was an enormous personal success. He charmed everyone who met or saw or heard him. He did not spare himself in the grinding schedule of the job he came to do." Faulkner "is patriotic, in the old-fashioned, untarnished sense of that adjective."

(To be continued)

A Visitor from Afar

Family Worship Center

July 26, 1988

Will Falkner
213 Oknapatwhpa
Oxford, MS 38655

Dear Brother Falkner:

Greetings in Jesus' name!

It was indeed a pleasure to have you visit with us at Family Worship Center. On behalf of Brother Swaggart and the entire staff, please allow me to express our deep appreciation to you for being with us in our worship services. We trust that you were uplifted and you enjoyed the services.

I realize that you visited with us from some distance away, and we were delighted to have you in Baton Rouge and our church. We trust that you will come back to visit with us again soon.

May the Lord continue to bless you and strengthen you.

In the Master's service,

Jim Rentz
Pastor

JR/lj

Telephone (504) 768-6113
9119 World Ministry Avenue (*½ Mile South of I-10 on Bluebonnet Road*) • Baton Rouge, LA 70810-9099

FUNSTERS KEEP SIGNING FA(U)LKNER'S NAME to unlikely documents and in strange, far-flung places. Like someone who sent for application forms in his name to the Famous Writers School; the forms are still in Faulkner's "office" at Rowan Oak. And like someone who this year signed a visitor's card at Jimmy Swaggart's place in Baton Rouge, giving a variant spelling of Mississippi's most famous county and an earlier version of the man's name, but close enough to both to land in the mailbox of Dean Faulkner Wells and Larry Wells of Oxford's Yoknapatawpha Press.

Rowan Oak *(From Page 1)*

hopes enough good ones remain, so new ones won't have to be fabricated.

Hale estimates three to four months will be required to restore each building. But unless more money is raised, it won't be possible. Some $38,336 is available from all sources, or about 15 percent of the funds needed.

Hale hopes more contributions will come when people see that work has begun. Bahr sees the critical needs worsening with each passing week.

"The outbuildings had to be left until later," Bahr said, "and later has arrived."

Without more contributions, "later" may become "too late." Bahr continues to show visitors bricks turning to dust, walls sagging and buildings crumbling away, the exacting price of time and consequences that Faulkner knew only too well.

(Jim Cleveland is director of Public Information for the University of Mississippi. See FN, *Vol. VI, No. 2 [April-June 1986] for a report by David Morris on the renovation needs of the Rowan Oak outbuildings, accompanied by three photographs. Contributions to the Rowan Oak fund may be sent to Dr. Evans Harrington, chairman of Ole Miss' Rowan Oak Maintenance and Operations Committee, University, MS 38677.)*

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